



MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITY

USNS MERCY (T-AH 19)

FPO AP 96672-4090

MERCY NEWSLETTER

May 15, 2006

Vol. 1, No. 01

San Diego-based Hospital Ship USNS MERCY (T-AH 19) Deploys

By
USNS MERCY Public Affairs

San Diego – With more than 300 family members and friends on Pier 2 at Naval Station San Diego, the San Diego-based hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) set sail on Monday, April 24.

“While the day is bright weather-wise, it is also bright mission wise,” Petty Officer 1st Class Jason Moore said.

Moore, a hospital corpsman, added that the family separation that comes with deployments will not be easy, but through the use of e-mail and the occasional phone call home we will keep the home lights burning.

“I was here during last year’s deployment, and while I am not crazy about the family separation, I’m looking forward to what lies ahead and conducting follow-ups on our work in the aftermath of the tsunami recovery assistance,” Moore said.

Moore is assigned to MERCY’s 58-member military personnel reduced operating status (ROS) cadre crew who help keep the medical treatment side of Mercy ready to deploy on a five-day notice.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Daniel Konzek, a re-deploying veteran of Operation Unified Assistance said, “I was on board for last year’s deployment to the tsunami-destroyed areas of South and Southeast Asia. I look forward to returning to the same general area this year to assist further with what they may need help with.”

Konzek is a yeoman and a Vancouver, Washington native. He is a member of MERCY’s ROS cadre’ crew who help maintain MERCY during her import periods.

“This is great opportunity for everyone involved. I know of many Sailors who wanted to be a part of this mission who were not selected to deploy. They are disappointed but they too have a very important mission back home; to keep things running smoothly in their care of our families,” Chief Petty Officer Anthony Cal said.

Cal, himself a 19-year Navy veteran, is also a hospital corpsman.

“I’ve deployed several times, and while each deployment is important, none has been as important to me as this one,” he added.

A San Diego resident, Cal said that this crew, put together by Navy Medicine, is an elite hand-selected crew of multi-service personnel whose specialties vary widely from medicine, to community and public health and veterinary medicine, to supply, administration, construction and spiritual health specialists.

31-year navy veteran, Cdr. Henry Villareal, MERCY’s executive officer, and officer in charge of Medical Treatment Facility MERCY during reduced operating status said, “MERCY’s cadre crew has worked hard for a deployment such this. Now, as all of MERCY’s deployment crew comes together to do the mission ahead, all the hard work is rewarded.”

Mercy is underway on a five-month deployment during which it will visit areas of South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands where its crew will work together to aid in humanitarian assistance in several host nations. Like all naval forces, MERCY is capable to rapidly respond to a range of situations on short notice.

On its way west, MERCY will embark several other commands: The Navy Show Band from Helicopter Support Combat Squadron (HSC) 25, Mobile Security Squadron (MSS) 7 and Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMBC) 40, all home-based in Guam, and various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

MERCY’s crew will provide general and ophthalmology surgery, basic medical evaluation and treatment, preventative medicine treatment, dental screenings and treatment, optometry screenings, eyewear distribution, public health training and veterinary services as requested by the host nations.

MERCY’s full operating status crew will have the opportunity to provide focused humanitarian assistance to areas of need through participation in Project Handclasp.

MAIL CALL

Keep those letters and packages to your loved ones coming! The mailing address is:

MTF USNS MERCY (T-AH 19)
CREWMEMBER’S NAME
DEPARTMENT, DIVISION
FPO AP 96672-4090

COMMANDING OFFICER'S CORNER

Good Day to Family and Friends of the Crew of USNS MERCY,

It has been a very busy time in preparation for what is ahead after our successful deployment from San Diego on 24 April. The time has been filled with planning meetings, securing for sea, stowing gear, cleaning, organizing, and most of all training. Our number one priority is safety of the crew aboard MERCY. We've met together for all-hands training, scheduled classroom training, assigned teams, conducted drills and tested the crew on all aspects of shipboard responses to emergencies. We have also established college courses on board, and many of our Sailors have enrolled into those or other proficiency classes.

It hasn't been all work and no play. We had two beautiful days in Pearl Harbor where more than 850 interested people from the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and civilian community visited the ship. The duty crew took these people around the ship to see Casualty Receiving, Radiology, CT Scan, the Lab, Blood Bank, ICU, the Operating rooms, Pharmacy and the Medical wards. The overwhelming response was amazement at the capacity of medical care we can deliver to the people in need in the countries we have been invited to visit.

We continue to train hard in preparation for our humanitarian mission in the Philippines at the end of May and first part of June. We pick up supplies in Guam, which is 3,368 nautical miles west of Hawaii. There is much more preparation and training ahead. The weather continues to get more humid and hot as we move west. It was sunny and warm as we celebrated Cinco de Mayo weekend. We kicked off with a Mexican-style dinner on Cinco de Mayo. We are planning a picnic on Sunday with the band playing music up on the "steel beach", as our flight deck is affectionately known.

Thank you for supporting us with yours letters, e-mails and words of encouragement as we move further west. The cell phones worked for several miles off the coast of Hawaii, but now our voice communication with families will be limited. I have asked that they put safety first. We will do our part to put our arms around all our Sailors and keep them safe.

All the best, and thanks again for all you do to support us in our Mission.

All the Best,
JOSEPH L. MOORE, M.D.
Commanding Officer
Medical Treatment Facility
USNS MERCY (T-AH 19)

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF'S CORNER

Welcome Aboard! Shipmates, families (familia) and our friends. My name is Roland Garza and I'm the Command Master Chief, onboard USNS MERCY (T-AH 19). First, I would like to say "Mi casa es su casa"! (My home is your home). This is a joint mission and we're all coming from many military installations all over the world to provide humanitarian assistance and medical care upon the request of the host nations. I can tell you that this select group of highly skilled & motivated Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen are looking forward to the new challenges they will face. This is "One Team, One Mission, One Goal" and that is to provide the best medical care to our patients.

Second, I would like to thank all our families and friends that were present at Naval Base San Diego, Pier 2 on 24 Apr 06 to wish us a safe journey. It is always hard leaving our loved ones on the pier. But they also know that we all have an important mission to accomplish. When all lines are in and the Ship's Captain gives the order to sound the ship's whistle indicating our ship is underway; I reflect on my family and friends and remember when my oldest son dedicated a poem he wrote some-time ago it's called "A Sailors Request" I would like to share that with you because it puts all into perspective.

A Sailor's Request

I am a Sailor standing proud and tall
As I depart to answer this call
What I leave behind is too much to bear
I'll be missing every second I'm not there
But as I go off to fight for your many rights
When I'm all alone in my bunk and scared
It will be you who I'm thinking of, My family, My love
For it is you I fight for, so all I ask for is one little thing.
Please don't stop thinking of me.
Say a little prayer for me & my crew
As I sail off into the ocean blue
As I wave off to you
Please don't forget that I love you.

-----Roland Garza Jr.

We have our command support group in place to provide assistance to our MERCY families should the need arise through our Command Ombudsman Mr. Lynne Slaughter, Mrs. Laura Moore, and our newest member Mrs. Jazmine Chillious. I'm honored and blessed to be your Command Master Chief and part of our USNS MERCY Crew. "Fair Winds & Following Seas" and I welcome you to our Familia.

HMCM(SW/FMF) Roland Garza
Command Master Chief
MTF USNS MERCY (T-AH 19)

Monday, April 24, 2006: U.S. Naval Hospital Ship USNS MERCY (T-AH 19) sets sail for South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, with nearly 300 doctors, nurses, hospital corpsmen, supply and support personnel and Merchant Mariners on board, to provide humanitarian assistance to host nations in the region.



COMMAND OMBUDSMEN

Your command ombudsmen are available to help you as information and referral resources, and as communication links between the command and the families. They are Navy spouses and volunteers. They have information on local and national resources that can help with financial support, food resources, furniture, counseling, spouse employment, volunteer opportunities, deployment support, and much more! They can also contact the command in emergencies, to get messages to crew members and for assistance.

The USNS Mercy Ombudsmen are:

Mr. Lynn Slaughter, mercyombudsman@nmcsd.med.navy.mil

Mrs. Charina Villareal, mercyombudsman2@nmcsd.med.navy.mil

Mrs. Jasmine Chillious, mercyombudsman3@nmcsd.med.navy.mil

The Ombudsman phone number is: (619) 892-0788. Emergency messages left on this phone will be answered day or night, seven days a week.

Here are some useful websites for military families:

Naval Medical Center San Diego (Balboa): www.nmcsd.med.navy.mil

Morale, Welfare and Recreation, Navy Region Southwest: <http://www.mwrtoday.com>

Navy Region Southwest: <http://www.cnrsw.navy.mil>

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

Pot-Luck!

The Mercy Family Support Group (FSG) will be having a pot-luck dinner at the downtown San Diego USO. Come make new friends and meet the old (friends, that is)! Bring the kids, of course! Along with the great food everyone will be bringing, there will be an activity for the kids, something for the grown-ups and pictures from the Mercy!

For more information, please contact Laura at MercyFSG@nmcsd.med.navy.mil.

If you are a USNS Mercy family member and you have ideas for great future FSG activities and Homecoming, we'd love to have you join us at our next planning meeting! Contact Laura at MercyFSG@nmcsd.med.navy.mil for information.